NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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M-B-F-R -- ONE HUNDRED MEETINGS

ANNCR:

NATO AND WARSAW PACT NEGOTIATORS IN VIENNA HAVE HELD THEIR ONE HUNDREDTH PLENARY SESSION ON REDUCING ARMED FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE. VOA'S MARK HOPKINS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM OUR EUROPEAN BUREAU.

VOICE:

ONE HUNDRED SESSIONS AND NEARLY TWO AND ONE HALF YEARS AFTER THEY BEGAN, THE TROOP REDUCTION TALKS HAVE NOT REALLY MOVED ANYTHWERE. NATO AND WARSAW PACT NEGOTIATORS HAVE EXCHANGED PROPOSALS. EACH SIDE HAS FOUND SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE LATEST IDEAS OF THE OTHER TO BEGIN DRAWING SOME TROOPS, TANKS, AND MISSILES OUT OF CENTRAL EUROPE.

THE FORMULAE ARE COMPLICATED. THE BASIC DISPUTE IS NOT. THE WEST WANTS TO SCALE DOWN THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN FORCES OF NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT SO THAT BOTH ARE LOWER BUT EQUAL. THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES NOW HAVE MORE TROOPS AND TANKS THAN THE WEST. THEY WANT REDUCTIONS THAT WILL MAINTAIN THAT SUPERIORITY.

THE SEVEN NATO AND FOUR WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED -- INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION -- MAINTAIN SOME OF THEIR LARGEST ARMIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE. THE INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES GIVES THESE FIGURES: FOR NATO -- AN ARMY OF EIGHT HUNDRED THOUSAND TROOPS, MORE THAN SIX THOUSAND BATTLE TANKS, THIRTEEN HUNDRED COMBAT AIRCRAFT. FOR THE WARSAW PACT -- NINE HUNDRED THOUSAND TROOPS, MORE THAN FIFTEEN THOUSAND TANKS, AND TWENTY EIGHT HUNDRED PLANES.

THERE HAVE BEEN OFFERS BY BOTH SIDES TO WITHDRAW SOME OF THESE FORCES -- SOVIET AND AMERICAN TO BEGIN WITH. BUT THE QUESTION IS HOW MANY, BY WHICH COUNTRIES? ONE AIM OF THE WARSAW PACT -- THOUGH NOT DIRECTLY STATED -- IS TO CUT DOWN THE SIZE OF THE HALF MILLION MAN WEST GERMAN ARMY, ONE OF THE LARGEST IN EUROPE AFTER AMERICAN FORCES. SELECTIVE REDUCTIONS THAT, IN THIS CASE, WOULD WEAKEN THE WEST GERMAN ARMY ARE REJECTED BY NATO. SO ARE THE PROPOSALS THAT WOULD LEAVE THE SOVIET UNION WITH ITS SUPERIORITY OF FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE.

THE RESULT IS THAT SO FAR THERE IS NO PUBLIC INDICATION AFTER ONE HUNDRED FORMAL BARGAINING SESSIONS ON TROOP REDUCTIONS, AND MANY MORE PRIVATE TALKS, THAT THIS SET OF EAST-WEST NEGOTIATIONS IS NEAR ANY AGREEMENT.

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GH/RTD